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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Bravo Battery adjusts to life in Iraq

By Capt. Anthony Deiss

CAMP CEDAR II, Iraq – Life in a war zone is becoming all too familiar for the 180 Soldiers of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery. The South Dakota Army National Guard unit deployed to Iraq in January in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and is now making the necessary adjustments to cope with the challenges that face units while on deployment.

“The Soldiers have learned a great deal about the area and what to expect since our arrival,” said Maj. Kory Knight, battery commander. “That learning is still on going.”

Battery B conducts a variety of missions from operating entry/traffic control points and base defense operations to route security and recovery missions for KBR supply convoys.

“We are fortunate to be doing these missions,” said Knight. “We have multiple types of missions and the Soldiers enjoy a variety of jobs, so unit morale remains high.”

Adapting to this security mission is quite common for field artillery units since the beginning of the war. Many South Dakota Guard units have found themselves tasked with conducting missions they are not traditionally designed to perform.

The unit has conducted about 70 different missions since its arrival in Iraq, but probably none more important than gaining the trust of the local Iraqis.

“The Soldiers have done a great deal of work with the Iraqi people,” said Knight. “We are working programs to assist their school and the community as a whole. We have also provided them with some medical assistance.”

The South Dakota Guard unit is stationed at Camp Cedar II, near An Nasiriyah, Iraq, about 190 miles southeast of Baghdad.

“The local sheik is very supportive of us and has stated numerous times that he really appreciates the support of the U.S. Army,” said Knight. “However, keep in mind there are those who are not supportive, and those are the ones we are trying to stop.”

The unit faces many challenges in their current mission, such as separation from family, reliable internet access, adjusting to the climate and becoming proficient in its mission.

“Another challenge is controlling oneself in the chow hall,” said Knight. “The food here is very good.”

But with all the adjustments, the unit is getting better at what they do, and the Bravo Battery commander knows their presence is making a positive impact.

“The most rewarding thing I can see is that the Soldiers continue to grow in experience everyday,” said Knight. “The majority of the people in this area do support our efforts and they are very excited to work with us.”

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Photo cutline 20080117-A-5049M-007: Battery B, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers Maj. Kory Knight, commander (left), of Hartford, and 1st Lt. Travis Lieb, platoon leader (center), of Big Stone City, greet Sheik Kahli, leader of a local village, near An Nasiriyah, Iraq, on Jan. 17, 2006, as 1st Sgt. Roach, Alpha Company, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Virginia Army National Guard, looks on during a civilian military operation mission. Bravo Battery took over for the Virginia unit and is working to resupply the nearby village’s school and provide medical aid to some of the villagers. (Army photo by Master Sgt. Alan Meyer)(Released)

Link to Photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/20080117-A-5049M-007.JPG>

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